THALES TO EQUIP FRENCH MILITARY TANKER AIRCRAFT WITH SECURE SATCOM SOLUTION

News / Manufacturer

As part of France SYRACUSE IV military satellite telecommunication programme, the French defence procurement agency (DGA) has awarded Thales and its partners the 17-year MELISSA2 contract for the development, integration and support of aircraft satcom stations. To meet the connectivity needs of the French Air and Space Force as high-intensity conflict returns, Thales will provide a resilient, high-data-rate satellite station capable of connecting large military aircraft in all circumstances.

The Thales terminal is derived from a proven satcom product that has accumulated over 30,000 flight hours on commercial airliners. The militarised version is specifically designed to maintain connectivity with command centres in jammed environments and severely degraded flight and weather conditions. It operates with France's SYRACUSE IV sovereign satellite system and is also compatible with any allied military or commercial satellites.

This ARINC3 standard satcom station uses the military and civilian Ka bands. It is installed on the fuselage of large aircraft,such as the MRTT tanker, A400M transport and AWACS surveillance planes.

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The Thales teams and their partners successfully overcame a host of technical challenges to design a highly compact device, despite aeronautical and electromagnetic constraints, achieve extremely high-precision pointing to maintain a stable link with the satellite during aircraft manoeuvres, and manage cyber threats.

This first in aviation further consolidates Thales's leadership in the European market for secure, resilient military satellite communications. For over 10 years, Thales has provided critical STANAG 4606 compliant communications for NATO and the land and naval forces of 12 countries in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

The industrial organisation put in place by Thales for the MELISSA contract includes partners recognised by the DGA, such as the French SME Eclipse,4 as well as Thales's Gennevilliers and Cholet industrial competence centres and its Brive production facility. This organisation will guarantee timely delivery of the contract and the long-term sovereignty of the supply chain, and will consolidate the expertise of France's defence technological and industrial base in the area of satellite technology.

"The DGA's decision to equip France's military tanker aircraft with our secure satellite communication solution is a source of great pride for the Thales teams and reflects our unique know-how and European leadership in secure, resilient satellite connectivity. This ultra-high performance sovereign solution will be a key asset for the French forces engaged in high-intensity conflict missions." Jean-Claude Schmitt, Vice President, Network and Infrastructure Systems, Thales.

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